

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for securely distributing a component from a network host to a network appliance, comprising the steps of:
 - signing, by said network host, a configuration file including a load table which defines a plurality of authorized components for said network appliance;
 - executing a secure kernel and said signed configuration file on said network appliance, said secure kernel including computer code for checking the authenticity of said configuration file;
 - verifying, by said secure kernel, the authenticity of said configuration file;
 - reading, by said secure kernel, said load table only after said verifying step; and
 - loading said plurality of authorized components onto said network appliance.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said loading step comprises loading an operating system.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said loading step comprises loading a computer software application.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said loading step comprises loading services.
5. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
 - generating, by said host, an updated configuration file;
 - signing, by said host, said updated configuration file;
 - transmitting said signed updated configuration file from said host to said network appliance;
 - verifying, by said secure kernel, the authenticity of said updated configuration file; and

30 thereafter reading, by said secure kernel, said updated configuration file.